

4 November 1983

SAN FRANCISCO
NEUTRALITY
BY SUSAN GOLDFARB

STAT

A federal judge has given the attorney general of the United States 90 days to investigate criminal allegations that President Reagan and other top officials broke the law in supporting paramilitary operations against the Nicaraguan government.

District Judge Stanley A. Weigel ordered William French Smith to determine whether Reagan, then-Secretary of State Alexander Haig, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and other government officials violated the Neutrality Act in directing military plans aimed at overthrowing the leadership of the Central American nation.

The act prohibits organizing or launching paramilitary expeditions against countries with which the United States is not at war.

If they are found guilty, President Reagan and the others could theoretically each face \$3,000 fines and up to three years in prison.

Rep. Ronald Dellums, D-California, who filed the suit with two others, asserted he had asked Smith to investigate the government officials in January and Smith refused.

Dellums said in Washington after Thursday's decision that he was "especially pleased with the judge's argument that citizens have the right to sue under the Ethics in Government Act.

"I would agree completely with his assessment that the act would be 'meaningless' if determined otherwise. This ruling holds the potential of shining Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes' bright light into the darkest recesses of our government's operations.

"We await the administration's response in the hope that they will accept the spirit of Judge Weigel's opinion...."

The Ethics in Government Act requires the Attorney General to "conduct an investigation whenever (he) receives information sufficient to constitute grounds to investigate" that federal officers have violated criminal law.

CONTINUED